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JOURNALISM OF COURAGE

DIG's arrest by CBI blows lid off 'big fish' involved in corruption in Punjab Police

Punjab Police's crackdown on corruption has largely focused on the lower ranks, with senior officers long evading the net.

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DIG Ropar HS Bhullar at GMSH sector 16 after medical examination. (Express Photo)

Just 15 days after Punjab Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav cautioned senior officers of the force on zero tolerance towards corruption, the arrest of Ropar Range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Harcharan Singh Bhullar by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on bribery charges, and the massive amount of cash recovered from his house, has blown the lid off the rampant corruption in higher ranks of the police.

Bhullar's arrest comes at a time when the much-touted crackdown on corruption within the Punjab Police has remained focused on lower ranks like constables, assistant sub-inspectors, sub-inspectors and the occasional Punjab Police Service (PPS) officer, even as senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officers have remained untouched.

The only recent case where an IPS officer was targeted is that of Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) SPS Parmar, who was suspended from service while serving as chief director of vigilance in April 2025, along with PPS officers Swarandeep Singh and Harpreet Mander. There were charges regarding misconduct and dereliction of duty related to the suspension of the three vigilance department officers, who were suspended and then reinstated soon after. However, no specific allegations of corruption were made against them.

In May 2025, Fazilka Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Varinder Singh Brar, a PPS officer, was suspended after four junior officers were allegedly caught taking a bribe by the Vigilance Bureau.

Bhullar was reportedly extorting a monthly payment of Rs 5 lakh from a scrap dealer in connection with an ongoing case. (X/@CBIHeadquarters)

Senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Manish Sisodia had at the time posted on his handle on X, “Punjab Government takes firm action against corruption — no one is above the law! SSP Fazilka, Varinder Singh Brar, has been suspended after 4 police officers were caught red-handed by the Vigilance Bureau, accepting a ₹1 lakh bribe from a minor boy, reportedly over videos found on his phone. This isn’t just a slogan — it’s visible action. From constables to SSPs — if you’re corrupt, you will face the consequences”.

Brar was reinstated in service three months later in August 2025.

A majority of the lower-ranked police personnel dismissed from service on corruption charges are accused of taking bribes in thousands, while Rs 5 crore was recovered in cash from DIG Bhullar’s house, and the eventual count may be higher.

An uneven crackdown on corruption

In his video conference with all state SSPs, commissioners of police, superintendents of police, deputy superintendents of police and station house officers on September 30, DGP Yadav had reiterated the commitment to zero tolerance towards corruption, stating that anyone, irrespective of their rank, found involved in corruption would be dealt with strictly and exemplary action would be taken.

However, the facts on the ground show that the predominant actions taken by Punjab Police, as well as Punjab Vigilance, have focused on non-IPS officers and non-gazetted-ranked personnel. In view of this background, the trap laid down by the CBI has exposed the rot in the Punjab Police hierarchy, which has remained unexposed for long.

As per data available from Punjab Police media statements, around 52 policemen have been dismissed for corruption, as part of the crackdown announced by DGP Yadav. It was part of the AAP government’s zero-tolerance policy, following directives for greater accountability from Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

However, granular data shows that most of these dismissals were of lower-ranked officials and that the majority of the cases pertained to absenteeism for a prolonged period of time.

Action on the lower ranks

Given below are details of some of the police personnel dismissed across Punjab in the last few years and the reasons for dismissal:

1. **ASI Shashpal Singh:** This Batala police official had no corruption case against him. He was dismissed due to his long absence from duty.

2. **ASI Balwinder Singh:** This Amritsar Rural police official also had no corruption case against him. He was dismissed for long absence from duty.

3. **Harpal Singh:** This Amritsar Rural police official was booked at Sadar Tarn Taran police station for accepting a bribe of Rs 20,000 in 2022. His case is pending in court, and he has been dismissed under the same charges.

4. **ASI Jagroop Singh:** He was allegedly caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 while posted at Talwandi Sabo police station in 2023. He was arrested in a trap laid by the Vigilance Bureau and later dismissed from service.

5. **Constable Amritpal Sharma:** He was dismissed from service in February 2025 after an FIR was registered against him in 2023 for allegedly possessing 1.5 gm of heroin.

6. **Inspector Kuldeep Singh:** Posted as SHO at Raikot Sadar police station, he was booked under Indian Penal Code sections related to extortion, cheating, and criminal conspiracy, and under the Prevention of Corruption Act in an FIR dated February 4, 2018, registered at Raikot City police station. He was booked along with a woman, Inderjit Kaur of Bathinda, for allegedly extorting Rs 28 lakh from Mann's brother-in-law Balkar Singh of Jalalabad. He was dismissed from service.

7. **Senior constable Dalbir Singh and constable Guriqbal Singh:** These Mohali police officials were dismissed in a 2022 corruption case. The police allegedly seized 5 gm of heroin and ill-got money totalling Rs 19,000 from them.

8. **Constable Vikas:** He was dismissed from service following an FIR against him after the recovery of 100 gm of heroin, a revolver, and five cartridges from him at Sadar Moga police station in 2021.

9. **Senior constable Prabhjot Kaur:** This Faridkot police officials had been absent from duty since November 7. She was dismissed from service in February 2025.

10. **Constable Rupinderjit Singh:** This Faridkot police official, who had been absent from duty since July 26, 2023, was dismissed from service in February 2025.

DIG Bhullar's corruption allegations and the massive recoveries of cash and valuables from his house in Chandigarh dwarf all the allegations made against the above-named police personnel dismissed from service.

Dismissing the bail application of Rajjit Singh Hundal, an assistant inspector general AIG dismissed from service in April 2023 on charges of corruption and collusion with drug mafia, Justice Anoop Chitkara of Punjab and Haryana High Court quoted the 16th century English playwright and poet Francis Beaumont: "Corruption is a tree whose branches are of an unmeasurable length; they spread everywhere; and the dew that drops from thence, Hath infected some chairs and stools of authority".

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